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I speak of this in particular because bacteria that are propagated by spore-formation are the hardest to destroy, and have to be dealt with in a more thorough manner and with stronger disinfectants. The streptococci and staphylococci that cause suppuration, and perhaps the tubercle bacilli, come under this head.

(To be continued.)

WOMEN ON HOSPITAL BOARDS *

By ISABEL HAMPTON ROBB

SO MUCH has already been said on this subject that any additional remarks would hardly seem to be required, but the whole subject is one about which nurses, whether superintendents or others occupied outside of hospitals, should take pains to carefully inform themselves, for opportunities come to many nurses to discuss just such questions, when the right kind of knowledge would be of much value in helping either the individual or the public to reach correct conclusions regarding the administration of hospitals in respect to boards of women managers. This brief paper that I have the honor to prepare for the Congress it may be of some profit to devote to the consideration of our attitude of mind as a profession towards women on hospital boards, and to try to place a true value upon woman's services in such work, to consider her proper selection and the best methods of organizing her work, by which the most effective service may be rendered and harmony preserved for all. In taking an honest vote of our position towards the subject, it is safe to say, judging from opinions freely expressed in private and from our negative attitude in reference to it in public, that the vote from superintendents would be in favor of working in hospitals where boards of women managers do not exist. This feeling is perhaps partly due to the old-time belief in women's incompatibility to work with women (which, like all fixed traditions, dies slowly), and partly to the fact that, in some instances, this incompatibility has been experienced, and all such experiences, as we know, are swift in being carried from one to another, and are likely to leave a prejudice in the minds of the hearers. For less reason the feeling is usually shared by the staff of hospital nurses, not so much the result of any special comments they may have heard passed upon lady managers, or of any particular reasoning on their own parts, but because of an unsympathetic feeling respecting the matter that pervades the hospital, due, it may be, to the unspoken but negative attitude

* Read at the Congress of Nurses, September, 1901.

on the part of their superintendent, and occasionally fostered by the thoughtless remarks of inexperienced, unthinking members of the hospital medical staff, who sometimes regard with suspicion the possibility of an outside interference in their own particular province. This feeling might be put in words something as follows: Visiting ladies are apt to be interfering, opinionated in affairs they cannot know very much about, busybodies, and stirrers up of trouble; therefore are to be regarded with suspicion and treated with scant or enforced courtesy. That some such feeling pervaded hospitals so long as twenty years ago I can testify, and it seems but yesterday as I recall with what apparent toleration the board ladies' visits were received in the wards by the nurses. In my own particular case, nothing but good to myself came of the only time when, as a pupil, I encountered a board lady. She came behind the screen where I was busy in "doing up" a patient, and, taking in some of the details, she abruptly put the question: "Can you comb a patient's hair so that it doesn't pull and hurt the patient all the time? There is not one nurse in a hundred who knows how to comb a patient's hair properly," and she passed on, leaving me with the determination to excel in at least that one point in nursing, so that I never after combed a patient's hair without giving special thought to her comfort, and the duty became a pleasant one. With superintendents, the true source of their objections to visiting ladies lies in a dread that their own ideas and ways may be interfered with or hampered, or that they may be disturbed by constant and untimely visits and by unnecessary solicitations for patients from any and all of the board. There are few of us but like to do our work in our own way, but where this work has to do so vitally with so many people, both well and ill, and where it is a public trust, to do it one's own way absolutely is not wise or best, and I am sure that the older we grow and the more experienced we become the more do we become of this mind, and are ready to welcome any and all arrangements that will help the work on and enable us to take a broader and more impartial view of it. To do the subject justice, we must, in the first place, take an absolutely impartial and impersonal view of it. The difficulty has been, and is, to be able to eliminate the personal equation, but this must be done, and only the question "Of what benefit are such boards likely to be to the hospital?" be allowed to influence us. As a matter of fact, in all hospital work, the more one can manage to keep self in the background and make the work and its best interests the first thought and consideration, the happier and the greater success one is sure to obtain, and sensitiveness and friction will seldom need to be dealt with. Were I to allow the personal feeling to predominate, I should frankly take the side against women serving on hospital boards,

as I did at a time in my hospital career before I had experienced both ways of working, and was not a fit judge on so important a matter. But, making the best interests of the hospital the first consideration, I unhesitatingly take sides in favor of women on hospital boards, and this decision is reached after personal experience in working, first in two of the largest hospitals in the country, where the administration of the hospital and training-school in each case was quite distinct, the former being entirely in the hands of men and the latter in those of women; later, in a hospital where the trustees were all men and the women were only an auxiliary board, giving lavishly of their time and means to procure materials and necessities generally for the hospital consumption, but having no voice in the management or direction of hospital affairs, not even to requiring an account of the disposition of the abundant materials supplied by them; and again, later, came the experience in a large hospital where everything in and about the place was administered and controlled by a board of men trustees; and, finally, it has been my privilege to work as a member of a board of women managers in a hospital administered by both men and women, the men in the capacity of trustees and the women as a board of managers. In addition to this, I have watched with keen interest the administration in all sorts and conditions of hospitals, both in this country and abroad, and the conviction has been constantly strengthened that women are needed in the administration of all such institutions, not just because they are women, or for any Women's Rights reasons, but because history shows their need and usefulness and the tremendous influence and part they have taken in establishing and improving hospitals all over the world, and because wherever the atmosphere of home is needed, there their presence is needed. And where should such an atmosphere be fostered so much as in a hospital, and how can this be done without women's many-sided views of caring for the home part? You all know the old saying, "Men may work from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done," and this is true, although men work out in the larger fields of the world, and her chief occupation lies in the home; but here she has also to do with men, women, and children, and with the thousand and one things we all know require attention to make a successful home and that are never ceasing, while a man's work lies upon straighter lines, as a rule, and his occupation in life demands, as the bread-winner, the greater amount of his attention; hence, in the matter of home details, he must depend on the women to take care of them, and so is unfamiliar with them; and the same holds true in hospital work. For the greatest success of the work both men and women are essential, working together understandingly, one to look after the financial part and such affairs

as more strictly come under men's knowledge and experience, and the women to look after the details and housekeeping part and such home affairs as women are more conversant with. But if we cannot have both, then I should without hesitation be in favor of retaining the women and letting the men go, for women have been proven no mean financiers or planners where the whole responsibility has rested with them, and from the stand-point of careful administration and economy they are undoubtedly far ahead of men trustees. One prominent example of which I can speak knowingly is that of the Illinois Training-School for Nurses, Chicago, organized by a few women for the purpose of bringing relief to the city's sick poor by introducing women nurses into the wards of the city and county hospital. It has now made for itself a name as being the largest school in the country, does the nursing in two of the largest hospitals, has steadily increased its plant as the need arose, has kept itself free from indebtedness, and is practically self-supporting; at the same time, for years it has been able to set aside a gift of fifty thousand dollars that had been given it for general use as a special fund, the income to be devoted to supplementing the cost of good nurses, who are supplied by it at small rates to people of moderate means. The school is a model of perfect cleanliness, order, and the good care of pupil nurses, all of which is the result of the management of a board of twenty-four women, and, I may add, whose efficient superintendent for years has been our honorable president, Miss McIsaac. It may be asked, do not the hospital nurses as women represent the home element in institutions? They undoubtedly do, but then their supervision is restricted chiefly to the wards, and the superintendent of nurses is usually the only nurse who has access to most parts of the hospital. If she combine the position of matron with that of superintendent of nurses, then she has undoubtedly greater opportunities, but the matron is clever, indeed, who possesses the experience and wisdom to manage all the details of the various departments as thoroughly, carefully, economically, and perfectly as they should be managed out of the fulness of her own capabilities. Besides, why tax and overwork one woman when by a little management and system she may be assisted or relieved of an unnecessary amount of detail by the willing coöperation of a number of other women? I have heard it stated by superintendents on different occasions that board ladies make more work and trouble than they save. When such is the case, the fault lies more with the superintendent than her board of managers. Naturally they cannot be expected to know all the ins and outs of hospital life, but with proper organization, and especially with coöperation on the part of the superintendent of nurses, they grasp the situation in a surprisingly short

time, and they bring many good and practical suggestions not only to their own particular duties, but for the good of the whole institution. But to accomplish this much-to-be-desired result three things are absolutely necessary: they are, hearty coöperation on the part of the superintendent of nurses, a properly selected board of managers which is properly organized and which has strictly defined duties. I put the coöperation of the superintendent first, for this is most essential, otherwise a house divided against itself must fall, or, at all events, the results will fall far short of the best. So far as it concerns the hospital, the same mind should dwell in all who have anything to do with it, and that is, everything done and said should be with the best interest and greatest good of the hospital always uppermost. All its work should be done from this stand-point. The desire to have one's personal opinions prevail should not be fostered. On the contrary, the power to see affairs from other people's points of view and to accept cheerfully and carry out faithfully any decision arrived at is to be desired. In the formation of a board of woman managers, many more things have to be taken into consideration than the superintendent of nurses may always realize or may be too inexperienced to understand, and in some instances it may puzzle her to know why certain women are members of such a board. The reasons for selections may vary according to the sources from which the hospital is supported. Some hospitals, as we know, are supported by religious denominations, others may be richly endowed by private bequests; the municipal hospital is supported out of the city treasury, while others are dependent solely for support upon general contributions, and to this last class belong the greater number of hospitals. At the same time, no matter how securely endowed, or how independent a hospital may be of its public, it is always well to have a number of people in the community who take a personal interest in it, who are jealous of its good name, who will stand loyally by it if it is unjustly criticised, who will use their influence to make friends for it, and who will watch that it is worthy of the favor and confidence of all who may seek its shelter for aid, and the assistance of women in these respects is far-reaching. In addition to this, the active coöperation of well-known women whose names stand for integrity and what is best in the community at once lifts any institution their names are associated with above reproach, and strengthens its officials in their endeavors in this respect. Again, where the aim is to have the good of the hospital as far-reaching as possible, and where this is dependent upon the generosity of the individual, it is well to have among its supports friends who can serve not only philanthropically but financially, and can influence others to give. Thus the society woman, the woman who is known for

her indefatigable good work, the good, practical, economical house-keeper, and the business woman can all find a fitting place on hospital boards, the main point being to make clear to them their usefulness, to define their duties and their privileges and restrictions, and a board divided into suitable committees with an Executive Committee composed of the heads of these various committees may be useful in many ways. As an instance, in the absorbing interests of the practical side of their work, nurses for want of time are apt to lose sight of the fact that there are other factors besides medicines, and the purely practical nursing and prescribing, that act as tonics and medicines in the restoration of health, and that convalescence may be retarded by the patient falling into an indifferent, listless attitude of mind unless proper provision is made against it. And what brightens up the patients more than the sight of a new face, the bringing in fresh flowers, a bright, entertaining story, a quiet game of some sort, seeing the magazine pictures, and perhaps the supplying of some light work for the fingers? All of such things a ward visitor represents, provided the nurses will coöperate far enough to keep her in touch with the patient's needs. Such measures are sources of real economy and greater good, for they undoubtedly hasten convalescence, and give place sooner to others who need the care more. Again, a good, practical, far-seeing superintendent who is in hearty accord with her committees on hospital and household supplies can hold their interest to such an extent that much will be provided that will be a distinct saving to the hospital finances, and from the stand-point of the nurse to have a certain number of women in the community already conversant with her ability and her ambitions to further district nursing, visiting nursing, or whatever form her future work may take, is only one of the many advantages that other women may be to her. I have, in the brief time allotted, but imperfectly given some reasons why women are in place on hospital boards, and I beg to close by repeating that it lies in the power of the superintendent of nurses, if she be a capable, experienced executive officer, to develop more and more the good work done by such boards, for our hospitals of to-day, although far ahead in some respects, still fall short of possessing that home atmosphere that makes patients forget they are within the walls of an institution, and which can only exist where the presence of woman and her aid is the most strongly felt.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion on Mrs. Hampton Robb's paper was opened by Miss Mary C. Gilmour, superintendent of the New York Training-School for Nurses, Blackwell's Island, with special reference to the work of the

late Miss Louise Darche in having an Advisory Board of Women appointed at the above-mentioned hospital.

Miss Gilmour said:

"There seems to be such a diversity of opinion as to the usefulness or helpfulness of women on hospital boards that it is a difficult matter to know where to begin. People in general connected with hospitals feel that as a rule these women are not practical; they give too much attention to petty detail and not enough to the great object for which the work is going on—the saving of human life; that a misplaced chair or rug is in their eyes of greater moment and will excite keener criticism than the cause of the disorder, which may have been haste necessary in the performance of something of vital importance to a patient, and nothing can convince the visiting lady that she is unjust in her severe condemnation. As a nurse was heard to remark, 'There is no use trying to explain. Her mind is already made up. Appearances are against me.' On the other hand, people outside hospitals are of the opinion that women on these boards are an absolute necessity, that they supply the lack which is so apparent where only professionals are banded together, that doctors and nurses are so absorbed in their own work that anything which has not a direct bearing on the case in which they are interested is of little moment to them. Therefore it often happens that while one may find the immediate surroundings of a patient in immaculate condition, beyond that things are quite the opposite, and disorder reigns supreme, and scant consideration is shown to anyone who is not a 'case,' or necessary to the 'case.' To attempt, then, to control these two opposite factions and dovetail their work so as to make a harmonious whole of it is no easy task, and when it is accomplished the result is a very strong combination hard to break, and ideal conditions for discipline and progression are created. One such board working harmoniously with its institution is brought to remembrance to-day as an example of what such a body can do. This board was called into existence by one of our number since gone to her reward, the late lamented Miss Darche. This lady, called upon to undertake the duties of a superintendent in a school where men politicians held sway, found there one woman, a society lady of wealth and culture, whose advice was often taken on important matters connected with the school,—indeed, who had been the means of securing Miss Darche's own appointment. This woman, among her other many accomplishments, was thoroughly practical, thus rendering her aid invaluable. Single-handed, by her cleverness, wit, and sound common sense she accomplished many reforms which Miss Darche originated, but was unable to carry through from lack of political knowledge and influence. This lady, a committee of one, kept in very close touch with the school, as she said, to find the superintendent's limitations and help there. In this way many of the reforms originated by Miss Darche were talked over, and where Miss Darche reached her limit, this lady took her work, and in every case put the reform through. By reforms I do not mean matters relating to the internal administration of the school, which a superintendent should be able to handle herself. In regard to nursing, there Miss Darche was always supreme, because she had no superior in her profession, and that fact was soon recognized, but where money was needed, where influence was needed, or where people were needed to help on the work, there the committee of one was always ready, and after sufficient questioning to understand the subject, her share was cheerfully taken up in

every case, and nearly always carried through. This lady, like all other intelligent women, had her political views. She was a Democrat, and as long as Democrats were in power she was unassailable. The possibility of a Republican board over the school, the possibility of any board of politicians over the school and no committee of one to interview in its interests kept coming up in the future, for life is very uncertain, and Miss Darche began to look to this possibility with the result that a committee was formed, chiefly of women, called 'The Advisory Board of the New York City Training-School for Nurses.' The members of this board, wide in their aims, interests, and politics, were united in supporting the superintendent on all matters pertaining to the discipline and progression of the school. The committee of one became its chairman, and nobly has she fulfilled her office. In describing the board not long ago she said, 'We are here to act as a buffer between the Commissioner and the school, just as railroad cars are furnished to lessen or relieve the jar should they come together with unusual violence.' Her advice to another anxious board is worth quoting: 'Choose first your superintendent on her merits, and, of course, you will choose the best you can, then let her alone. When she needs help she will let you know, and then help her.' The Advisory Board makes monthly visits, goes over the hospital and home, hears the superintendent's monthly report, talks over new business, and gives any necessary assistance. Some of the work done by the board is as follows: All recommendations for increase of members on the staff of the Training-School or increase of salaries are endorsed by them. All special calls for lecture funds, etc., are met by them, and in any emergencies connected with the nurses of the Training-School, where financial help is necessary, it has been freely given. All disputed points requiring arbitration are turned over to them. Where work is carried on in this way by a board of lady managers good results must be achieved, and the work of the superintendent cannot be otherwise than lightened, while the moral and disciplinary effect must be to strengthen her hands and uphold her authority over her subordinates."

The President then called upon Miss Louisa Stevenson, of Edinburgh, to speak on this question.

Upon rising Miss Stevenson said in reference to the tragic death of President McKinley:

"I desire that my first words to this Congress should be to convey to you an expression of profound sympathy from the president, the vice-presidents, and all the members of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland, which I have the honor to represent to-day, upon the tragic sorrow which is now weighing this great nation down. I can assure you that these are no mere words. I thank you, Madam President, for permission to give expression to them.

"It may be thought that I am an interested supporter of the principle that hospital boards are benefited by the presence of women managers. For many years I was of opinion that there was a great deal of work in hospitals which would be left undone were there no women to attend to it, so about six years ago I came forward and was returned as a member of the Board of Management of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, and served for a term of five years. No member can serve for more than five years, so that this year I am off the board, and so it was within my power to attend this great Congress. I wish it dis-

tinctly understood that I came to learn, and not to teach. I believe that there is a great deal of work done in America from which we may learn much. I think also that there may be some things which you might learn from us; that must be left for the future. In the meantime you can visit our country and hospitals and see for yourselves what is going on.

"I have no hesitation in saying that after five-years' experience—for the first year I was alone on the board; there were twenty men and myself; the second year the second woman was appointed—our work was acceptable to everybody concerned. I have at this present moment no warmer friends in the world than those men on that board. We discussed many subjects which I brought before them which would not have been brought forward in any other way. We were on the most friendly terms. My experience is that there need be absolutely no friction whatever in women and men working together. I was on the most friendly terms with the managers, medical staff, and nurses, and everybody connected with the hospital. I confess that I have not so much confidence in boards of lady managers working apart from the general committee. I believe that the best work can be done by the women and men working together, and I believe that a large amount of friction is caused by women not having it in their power to carry out their own recommendations and resolutions. There is nothing more irritating than to have to make recommendations in a sub-committee which one knows one has no power to carry into effect. I do not know how it is with you in America, but with us I have always found that there is not such a superabundance of administrative power among the men of our country that we can afford to do without the perception possessed by the women. I do not think this question should be discussed as to the differences between men and women; if a man or woman has the administrative power, and understands what good work is, then that man and that woman are the right persons to be put upon a board of managers. I think for all public work there must be a certain amount of definite training. No one can do efficient work until they learn how to do it. I do hope from what I have seen in this and other countries, from what I know of hospitals under the supervision of boards composed of ladies, or partially of ladies, that those who know of the work these ladies have done in hospitals will realize its value and be converted to having women on the boards. There are many matters which do not occur to the men which are really necessary for the best interests of the institution, and I think it is of importance to have women on the boards to express their views on matters of which from experience they have a more intimate knowledge than men. Now, I really must not detain you longer, beyond assuring you that after five-years' experience I am fully convinced that there is work to be done on hospital boards which will be left undone unless the women take it up."

